

Sacrament of Reconciliation Service With Guided Meditation*

Quiet, meditative music is playing as people enter the Church.

*Lights are dim, with the light of the Advent wreath already lit as people gather.
Night lights may be lit around the base of the wreath for use later
(see meditation below).*

In a spirit of quiet prayer and reflection the Presider, as well as the ministers of reconciliation, are already seated throughout the church for a number of minutes before the liturgy begins.

As each person enters the church they are invited to take a holly leaf from a basket.

Introduction:

When it is time to begin a member of the community introduces the liturgy in the following words:

Good evening everyone and welcome to this celebration of God's love and forgiveness.

Tonight, at this service of reconciliation and healing, we come as a community to acknowledge the failures of the past, to offer healing, hope and reconciliation, to find a new and better future. For as scripture tells us, 'The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light'. On this night we acknowledge the darkness but more importantly we welcome the light.

This time of year nature around us expresses the struggle between darkness and the yearning for the light as we mark the **Winter solstice**. Darkness loses its firm grip to give way to increasing light.

Every one of us has our dark corners. We are all in some way flawed and broken. Tonight we remember that in the depths of darkness there is hope.

The birth of Christ marks the birth of One who is the greatest and most inspiring Light – Christ our Light. The invitation now is to invite Jesus, our Light, into our own struggles and darkness; Jesus who comes to us with the healing power of God's forgiving, compassionate love.

The introduction and guided meditation found in this resource were written by **Sr. Eileen Deegan and are reproduced here with her kind permission.*

Opening procession:

The presider stands and those leading the music invite the people to stand and to join in singing the chosen opening hymn:

Music Suggestions:

“O Come O Come Emmanuel”

“Come O Long expected Jesus”

“Be Still and know that I am God” *or another suitable communal hymn*

Greeting:**Opening Prayer:**

Let us pray...

Lord our God,

On this night we invite you into our hearts

As we prepare for the coming of our Saviour.

Come and enlighten us.

Help us to recognise our sin.

Helps us to know and trust in your mercy and healing.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. AMEN.

Invitation to listen to the word of God

We open our hearts to hear the Word which will now be proclaimed, encouraging us to reach towards the Light, to walk in the Light, to be that Light.

Liturgy of the Word

Isaiah 9:1-3

Silence

Psalm 25 “To you O Lord I lift my soul”

Or Psalm 85 – sung text Gather 48: “Lord, let us see your kindness”

silence

Alleluia

Gospel: Luke 3:1-6

Homily:

Rite of Reconciliation:**Examination of Conscience:**

Background is quietly music played during meditation which can be introduced by the priest celebrant and read by him or another.

Guided meditation: In the tranquillity of this guided reflection tonight we have the opportunity to meet with Jesus and allow to come before us what we need to bring to Him for healing and forgiveness.

Hold the holly leaf in your hand.

I invite you to make yourself comfortable, to enter into the peace and quiet of this sacred place... try to let go of the busyness of the day and enter into the now, the present moment. If you wish, close your eyes and focus on yourself and on how you are feeling at this time; tune into your breathing and be still. Enter into the interior room of your heart and rest in the stillness. Hear God speak to you, 'Be still and know I am your God'.

Be aware of the leaf you are holding, feel its sharpness and its smoothness. See in this leaf a symbol of your life as you come to God in this quiet time.

Invite Jesus into this time of quiet and ask Him to journey with you as you reflect on your life. Let the smooth part of the leaf be for you a symbol of all that is good in your life, all that brings you peace and hope. Tell Jesus what is hopeful and life-giving for you, maybe special relationships, family, friendship, good health, the ways in which you live honestly and generously, your sense of gratitude, your faith.

Now focus your attention on the sharp parts of the leaf, the rough edges. Let these symbolize for you the areas of your life that are not so life-giving. See in these sharp areas something of your life that is troubled, not at ease, in need of healing, in need of forgiveness. Maybe it is a hurt from the past, a difficult relationship, your failure to forgive yourself or someone else, your anger at the Church's failures and abuses, maybe it is your harsh criticism and lack of compassion for someone. Invite Jesus into these difficult, dark, sharp areas of your life. He knows, He understands. He wants to help make the rough places in your life smooth.

(The following scripture dialogue may be inserted at this point if desired – using two good readers for this *gentle* dialogue

- A. Out of the depths I cry to you, O God. Hear the voice of my pleading
- B. **When you call to me... when you come to plead with me I will listen to you**

- A. O Lord, my God, I cry to you by day...Let my prayer come to you for I cry to you for help
- B. **Do not be afraid, I am with you to help you...**

- A. I am overcome by my troubles; my heart is in anguish within me...
- B. **I, the Lord, am close to the broken hearted... I will heal your wounds. Cast all your burdens on me, your God and I will support you. I know the plans I have in mind for you; plans for peace, not disaster, reserving a future full of hope for you**

- A. Hope in God! I will again praise my Saviour and my God)

Imagine Jesus now placing His hands on your head and He is saying to you: You have received my gift of compassion and forgiveness tonight.

Be aware again of the leaf you are holding – this leaf is now a symbol of your life with God; you in your light and darkness; you as you are with your strengths and weaknesses held lovingly and tenderly in God's hands.

During our time of confession, when you are ready, take the holly leaf and place it in the baskets at the front and receive the light. You may choose to go to confession to one of the priests and then return by centre, dropping your leaf as you return to your place and receiving the light -reminding yourself that Christ is your light and that you wish to always walk in that light. This is an opportunity to mention what you wish to the priest – maybe name an area of your life for which you feel the need for forgiveness and healing. **(May you continue to let your light shine)** (2 people needed to hold baskets and two to present lights)

General confession of sins:

The presider invites the assembly to kneel and to pray together, I confess to almighty God...

Prayer litany:

Presider: Brothers and sisters we stand and entrust to God our hope for forgiveness and healing. Our response is – *Lord, hear our prayer.*

Presider/Reader: Lord of light and love, your mercy is our hope; welcome us to the sacrament of reconciliation. R.

Give us the will to change our lives by charity, good example and prayer. R.

As we make our confession remove our hardness of heart and lead us to the light enjoyed by your children. R.

Make us a living sign of your light, for all to see. R.

Through the sacrament of reconciliation may we grow in your peace and seek to spread it throughout the world. R.

The Lord's Prayer:

Presider: Assured of God's mercy and love, let us join in prayer to God the Father...Our Father...

Individual Confession and absolution:

Presider: I invite my brother priests to take their places.

As you come forward to confess individually and to receive absolution I invite you again to bring your holly leaf and on your way back to your place to drop it into the basket and receive a light.

Later, when we come to the final part of our celebration together, may the growing light of the candles serve as a sign of our willingness to welcome the light of the Christ child into our hearts this Christmas.

(During this time music ministers can lead the assembly in reflective music – both instrumental and sung, for example. Taize Music – “Wait for the Lord”; “To you O Lord My soul in stillness waits”; “O Comfort my people” For you O Lord my soul in stillness waits ...)

Sign of Peace:

Presider: We have received God’s love and forgiveness. Having blown out our candles, may we reach out to one another with a sign of peace, showing that we can be doers as well as receivers of God’s peace and love.

Closing Prayer:

Presider: Lord our God,
On the first day of creation,
You made the light that scatters all darkness.
Let Christ, the light of lights, hidden from all eternity,
shine at last on your people.
Fill our lives with good works, peace and love
as we go out to meet your Son with open and welcoming hearts.
We ask in the name of the one whose day draws near,
whose coming is certain,
our Lord Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Blessing: And May almighty God bless you...

Dismissal:

Presider: The Lord has forgiven you. Go in peace. THANKS BE TO GOD.

Going Forth: *A hymn, for example “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”, or instrumental music may accompany the people as they leave.*

During the closing procession the baskets of holly leaves are held aloft and carried out in procession.

Link with Christmas liturgies:

These same baskets might be carried in during a Christmas Eve liturgy and scattered around the crib scene in the Church.